

Kyodan

News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
JAPAN CHRISTIAN CENTER
551 Totsukamachi 1-chome
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan

Cable Address: Japankyodan Tokyo

Telephone: 202-0541

No. 73

April 20, 1973

NOVEMBER 20-23 HAS BEEN PROPOSED for the dates of the 17th General Assembly by the Assembly Preparation Committee. The committee, meeting in Tokyo, March 29-30, drew up a proposal for presentation to the next meeting of the Executive Committee which recommends that the Assembly be held around four topics: the Assembly system, the philosophy of mission, ministerial orders, and the Confession of Faith. The next meeting of the Executive Committee, which meets semi-annually, is expected to be convened in September.

THIRTY-SIX PERSONS--13 WOMEN AND 23 MEN--have qualified to become licensed pastors in the Kyodan, in examinations administered in February by the Committee on Ministerial Qualifications. The candidates came from nine seminaries, with the largest number, 13, being graduates of Japan Biblical Seminary, a night seminary in Tokyo.

In spring graduation ceremonies, seven seminaries reported a total of 90 graduates, 70 from undergraduate courses, 20 with graduate degrees. As the new school year began, the same schools reported a total of 62 freshmen, 17 transfers and 19 enrolling in graduate studies.

Of special interest is the fact that 7 of the 14 new students entering Tokyo Union Theological Seminary are women.

EMOTIONS WERE MIXED as 39 high school students set out from their homes for a spring camp at Lake Biwa in March--excitement over getting away for a few days, uneasiness about the experience that lay ahead.

Thirteen of the students were sightless boys and girls who attend special high school classes, 26 were sighted youth, many of whom had had no personal experience with persons who do not have sight.

Once the camp opened, self-consciousness vanished. Bible study and morning exercises, singing, folkdancing and baseball-for-the-blind eased the tensions. The recollections of Rev. Mikio Fukada, Doshisha Theology Department, of his experiences since childhood stimulated lively discussion.

As the three-day camp came to an end, one young man put the experience this way: It's not a case of establishing mutual understanding between blind people and people who have sight, it's a case of coming to understand one another as fellow human beings.

The camp is the seventh annual camp for high school students sponsored jointly by the Japan Council of Christian Evangelism with Blind People and the Kyoto, Osaka and Hyogo districts of the Kyodan.

Otsu church volunteers and alumni of former camps maintained the facilities and prepared the food for the camp.

"...mutual misunderstandings run deep BUT....."

j.s.

If Mashiko Sawa were an ordinary Japanese, his struggles would have ended ten years ago when he passed the examination to enroll in the prestigious Law Faculty at Tokyo University. From there his rise to the top of the government and business world was reasonably assured.

But Sawa--with a little help from his friends--began to see larger instead of smaller struggles. The admissions examination had been all "out there"--facts to be memorized and computed--and Sawa wanted to know more of what was "in here"--in his heart and in his identity, especially his identity as a Japanese in a fast-changing and ever-shrinking globe.

This self-examination led to two striking revelations, both in the context of the Christian church. While at Tokyo University, he began attending Bible classes led by Ruth Elmer, a Kyodan missionary, whom he describes as "the mother of my faith." The total reality of God's love in Jesus Christ called into question his motives for study and success at Todai, leading him to transfer to Tokyo Union Theological Seminary in 1966 and to become a licensed Kyodan pastor in 1972. (He has also passed the examinations for ordination but this awaits the resolution of problems on the matter of ordination currently an issue in his district and in the Kyodan at large.)

But before he transferred, there was the second striking revelation: in 1965 he heard Dr. In Ha Lee of the Korean Church in Japan speak at Tokyo Union Church about the Japan-South Korea Normalization Treaty (passed by the Diet in 1965 despite large protest demonstrations) and about the problem-filled history of Japan-Korea relations.

"In Ha opened my eyes," says Rev. Sawa. "I had never thought much about Koreans in Japan, let alone the ways Japanese discriminate against Koreans. Ever since that day, I cannot stop thinking about it."

On March 29, Rev. Sawa departed for Seoul to become the first Kyodan minister since the war to go to Korea as a co-worker with the Korean church. He is on a three-year assignment to

teach at Hankuk (Korean) Theological Seminary. He will teach Japanese, share theological books written in English and German, and continue study of Korean history, literature and theology.

Rev. Sawa will not be a stranger to Korea. He studied for two years at the Graduate School of Theology at Yonsei University, receiving a degree in Korean Church History in 1969. His thesis at Yonsei was a comparative study of attitudes toward socialism and communism in the Korean and Japanese churches.

In addition to falling in love with Korea, Sawa fell in love with Young Kim, also a graduate of Yonsei. They are married and the parents of two children, Tomoe, 2, and Masae, 8 months. The husband and wife have a friendly competition to master each other's native tongues. In terms of awards, Mrs. Sawa is ahead: last year she won first prize in a major Japanese-speaking contest for foreigners in Tokyo.

In 1970, Sawa received another degree, this time from Tokyo Union Theological Seminary with a thesis on "Nationalism and the Korean Churches." He then became lay pastor of Sakuramoto Church in Kawasaki City and later licensed pastor, continuing in this church until his recent departure. One of the features of his ministry there was the development of a number of joint programs with the Korean Church in Japan. The joint programs were not all butter and cream.

"The mutual misunderstandings between Japanese and Koreans run deep," says Rev. Sawa, "but I think most of the responsibility for this belongs to us Japanese. Koreans are always willing to seek Japanese friendship, but the Japanese are usually too preoccupied with seeking American and European friendships."

"The problems in my ministry have been many since the student days at Yonsei. Nevertheless, I have the firm belief that we can be reconciled," he says.

(continued)

Although parochialism and lack of international consciousness is often recognized among Japanese, Rev. Sawa has clearly broken out of the bounds. His interest is not restricted to Korea, but includes China and all of Asia. He has a special interest in Asia missions and Asia church history.

Theologically, Rev. Sawa considers himself a missionary (and has Kyodan certification to

this effect), but in the Korean context he prefers the word "co-worker." As such, he will be under the support of both the seminary (lecture fees) and a special support group within the Kyodan (including women's societies, Shinanomachi and Sakuramoto Churches, and other church groups). The Kyodan-related support will provide \$225 a month for living expenses and \$75 a month for contingencies.

REV. YUZURU HIRAI joined the Kyodan staff April. He succeeds REV. KAZUYO KISHIMOTO, who has become pastor of Fukuoka Kego Church.

Hirai was born in Kyoto and attended evening high school and junior college before entering Doshisha Department of Theology, from which he graduated in 1958. He has served Gosen Church in Niigata, Haraichi Church in Annaka and, most recently, Oji Church in Tokyo.

As a child, Hirai had infantile paralysis and, as a result, walks with a limp. It was his struggle with problems arising from this that led him to a Christian Sunday school. He became the first of the three boys in his family to become Christian.

Hirai describes himself as "gentle-appearing but strong inside" in spite of his slight stature. But what strikes you when you meet and talk with him is his boyish smile and his eyes, that sparkle with interest and warmth.

Of the Joint Broadcasting Committee, of which he will be secretary, Hirai says, "I hope we can help the churches throughout Japan become more aware and involved in the programs and in the people whom the churches can touch through broadcasting."

Kishimoto, who was a member of the Kyodan staff for more than six years, has held various important national and international committee posts. Now for the first time in his career he will be the minister in full charge of a church. He had served on the staff of the Reinanzaka Church in Tokyo before joining the staff. He has held many portfolios including the Youth Committee, Commission on Mission, Research Institute on Mission, Joint Broadcasting Committee and International Christian Youth Exchange Japan Committee.



a print by

AKIKO HIRAIDE

which makes use of the Hebrew

הללויה

hallelujah

appears on the cover

of the March issue of

SEISHO TO KYOKAI

(The Bible and the Church)

monthly Kyodan publication for

pastors, scholars, the laity

what has been -- I N T H E K Y O D A N -- what is to be

I. Coming Events

Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission to hold first mid-year executive meeting May 17-18

II. Recent Events

Ecumenical

NCC elects two laymen as officers for 1973-75; Takaaki Aikawa, chairman, Rev. Jo Yamada and Kenichiro Shiozuki, vice chairmen; studies how to restructure for Japan situation
also see "Coming Events," "Overseas"

Kyodan

General Assembly Preparation Committee meets March 29-30, draws up proposal to convene General Assembly Nov. 20-23, to be presented to Executive Committee (Shimpo 4/7, 4/21, News Letter 4/73)

Ministry

Sixty-three pastors pass qualifying exam to become licensed pastors in Kyodan (News Letter 4/73, Shimpo 4/21)

Mission

Commission on Mission discusses how to synthesize work of committees on evangelism, education, social concerns and ecumenical ministries at March 13 meeting (Shimpo 3/31)

Missionaries

Dorothy Taylor receives Fourth Order of Merit with Order of Sacred Treasure for serving the development of linguistic education in Japan (Shimpo 3/24)

Three hundred persons--missionaries and Kyodan representatives--attend Kyodan-related missionary conference on "the healing of the nations" March 27-28

COC honors six retiring missionaries: Belle Bogard, Edith and George Bragg, Nannie Hereford, Dorothy Taylor, Helen Zander at luncheon, and Annie Black, Esther Hibbard, Alberta Tarr, who could not attend. Years of service total 243.

Overseas

JNAC holds mini-meeting with Japan delegates in Tokyo 4/11
also see "Coming Events"

People

Sasagu Arai, 42-year-old professor at Tokyo University and member of Mabune Church, receives prestigious Japan Academy Award for his work on "Primitive Christianity and Gnosis"

Mrs. Masako Tsuboi, wife of Rev. Masao Tsuboi, pastor of Osaka Temma Church and former head of Kyodan Board of Publication, dies of cancer 4/5

Shiina Rinzo, spokesman of postwar writers, dies; known as Christian existentialist whose theme was freedom

Seminaries

Seven seminaries report ninety '73 graduates, eighty-eight persons enrolling as freshmen, transfers or graduate students (News Letter 4/73)

Women

Niji no Ie (Rainbow Haven) is name given Tateyama home for retired women pastors and workers; dedication planned for latter part of May